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**Testimony for the  
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
Jennifer Widness, President  
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges  
February 17, 2022**

On behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), I am submitting testimony on two bills before your today:

- **H.B. 5030: AN ACT CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR ADJUNCT FACULTY**
- **H.B. 5034: AN ACT PROHIBITING AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FROM CONSIDERING LEGACY PREFERENCES IN THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS.**

**H.B. 5030: AN ACT CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR ADJUNCT FACULTY**

This bill requires the Department of Labor to consider specific circumstances when determining whether an individual who performs instructional, research or principal administrative duties at an institution of higher education is eligible to receive unemployment compensation, to provide eligibility for unemployment benefits to certain adjunct faculty.

CCIC opposes this bill.

First, the nature of adjunct faculty is that their positions are part-time and temporary. They are hired by institutions of higher education to supplement the course offerings by teaching a course that may not need to be offered every year or every semester. It is not intended to be a permanent position. Many adjunct faculty are employed elsewhere; are retired from full-time work; or only desire part-time employment. According to a [TIAA Institute study on Adjunct Faculty](#), adjunct faculty are paid an average of \$3,000 per course, but almost 60% of adjuncts are in households with an income of \$50,000 or more. The majority of adjuncts are in households where adjunct earnings are not the primary source of household income.

Second, the bill is impractical on several fronts. It requires institutions of higher education to provide the Department of Labor a week before the end of each academic year or term a list of individuals who performed services in an instructional, research or principal administrative capacity services who *do* have a reasonable assurance of providing such services in the same

capacity during the second academic year or term and those who *do not*. It further requires the institutions to describe the way the reasonable assurance was offered.

**Institutions of higher education often cannot make a commitment in April to the Department of Labor what its fall course schedule will look like.** Schedules are finalized over the summer. If a course does not have adequate enrollment to proceed, a course may need to be canceled.

Last, this bill would be cost prohibitive to implement for institutions of higher education that are already facing fiscal stress due to the pandemic and exacerbated by fluctuating enrollments. At the majority of CCIC institutions, enrollments in Fall '21 are down from Fall '20. Omicron further required institutions to spend significantly on rapid tests and other measures for a safe re-opening this spring.

Unlike public institutions of higher education, independent institutions are self-insured and are required to cover their unemployment expenses out of their operating budget. If unemployment were to be made available to certain adjunct faculty – who are temporary, non-permanent employees by their very nature – institutions would be forced to pass the cost along to students and families.

#### **H.B. 5034: AN ACT PROHIBITING AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FROM CONSIDERING LEGACY PREFERENCES IN THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

This bill prohibits both public and independent colleges in Connecticut from giving preference to an applicant for admission to such institution on the basis of the applicant's familial relationship to a person who has graduated from such institution.

CCIC supports the *intent* of this bill – to promote equity and access in post-secondary education – but we oppose *the manner* in which the bill seeks to accomplish that goal by interfering with institutional autonomy. No state in the country prohibits independent colleges from considering legacy preference in the admissions process and only one other state – Colorado – prohibits public colleges from considering legacy admissions. Connecticut should not be the first, especially given the fact that need-based aid to Connecticut students attending Connecticut independent colleges has been cut 200% since 2012.

CCIC's member institutions have made a strong commitment to equity and access in education, despite drastic reductions in state need-based grant aid:

- [Between 2009 and 2020, enrollment at the CCIC institutions has grown 17%. During that same time, Pell-eligible enrollment has grown 80%.](#)
- As a sector, [25% of our undergraduate body is Pell-eligible](#), a higher percentage than the University of Connecticut.
- [50% of the minority students enrolled in an undergraduate public or private non-profit institution in Connecticut are enrolled at a CCIC institution.](#)
- [Annually, CCIC institutions award over \\$1.2 billion on institutional aid,](#) a 92% increase over ten years.

In contrast, the state's commitment to promoting equity and access in post-secondary education has waned in the last ten years. A recent report by the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) found that Connecticut invests only \$259 in student need-based aid per enrolled undergraduate, less than half the national average of \$721. Connecticut now ranks last in the region in our investment in need-based financial aid as a percentage of our overall higher education spending, at just 3 percent. State need-based aid only [comprises one-half of one-percent of CCIC institutions' total financial aid funding \(0.5%\)](#).

Higher education institutions in Connecticut take numerous strategies regarding legacy admissions. Collectively, however, we believe that the institutions are in the best position to determine the criteria that will help them build a diverse admissions class with an appropriate range of talent, background, and interests.

Some institutions in the country have determined that legacy practices negatively affect access for underserved populations and made a change to their process. At other institutions, legacy practices are vital in building their enrollment, including students from underrepresented backgrounds whose family members are alumni. **At a time when demographics are changing rapidly in the northeast and enrollments are down for the majority of CCIC institutions in the state due to the pandemic, institutions need the flexibility to make these admissions determinations.**

In summary, we ask the Committee to not move forward with this bill and consider taking less intrusive and more impactful action towards accomplishing the goal of promoting access and diversity in post-secondary education by re-investing in need-based financial aid.